

AD WATCH

Smoking and fashion

The tobacco industry's greatest fear, as revealed in Philip Morris documents obtained by a BBC Panorama television programme in 1979, is what they call "the social acceptability issue" — in other words, smoking becoming unfashionable.

Another document unearthed at the same time from British American Tobacco (BAT) set out ideas for marketing strategies to be pursued if and when advertising bans closed in around BAT's world. Most difficult of all under a ban, it said, was the task of conveying "the complex message which transmits its essential image in such a way that it motivates the consumer towards repeated purchases". It was important, it went on, to bring plans to fruition well before bans were imposed, and among the suggested solutions was to explore

"...opportunities to find non-tobacco products and other services which can be used to communicate the brand or house name, together with their essential visual identifiers. This is likely to be a long term and costly operation, but the principle is, nevertheless, to ensure that cigarette lines can be effectively publicised when all direct forms of communication are denied.... [T]he aim should be to choose a product that will actually enhance the tobacco brand image."

Of course, a good, tight tobacco control act can easily prevent any circumvention of this nature, but in the meantime, what better way of countering a slide towards the unfashionable

than by linking cigarette brands and smoking with fashion itself? It has a number of obvious advantages: fashion tends to attract the young and impressionable, and those with spare cash to spend; and fashion is among the most powerful routes to women consumers, especially young women, another cause close to the hearts of tobacco marketing men. Best of all, it is unashamedly about stylish, attractive, positive images, rather than about lung cancer, emphysema, and heart disease, or brown-stained fingers, dirty ashtrays, and smelly clothes and hair. Indeed, fashion is all about image, which is also perhaps the simplest description of tobacco advertising itself.

It is thus hardly surprising that the deliberate linking of cigarette brands with fashion images has now become widespread practice. Marlboro's range of designer Western clothes, RJ Reynolds' Yves St Laurent, and BAT's Pierre Balmain brands named after exclusive French fashion houses, and brands called Cartier, Dunhill, and Pierre Cardin will all be familiar to international air travellers and the aspiring millions who, by buying the products linked with them, hope to catch a little of their stardust.

As for the fashion industry itself, the cigarette offers the perfect prop. It has a firm historical foundation, being seen in the hands and mouths of countless Hollywood greats, the earliest international fashion models of them



From the February 1993 issue of Cosmopolitan magazine

Does the Marlboro Man drink milk?

The last issue of *Tobacco Control* carried an article about a grocery store promotion offering a discount on Thanksgiving Day turkeys for those who purchased a carton of Marlboro or three other Philip Morris cigarette brands.¹ Another distasteful tobacco/food promotion surfaced this past May, involving Marlboro and 7-Eleven convenience stores.

The Southland Corporation owns more than 7800 7-Eleven stores internationally. A promotional brochure describes 7-Eleven as "the recognized pioneer and leader in convenient extended-hour retail stores".² According to the brochure,

"Busy people...housewives, working men and women, *school children*... come early in the morning until late at night to buy milk, eggs, bread, and hundreds of other items. And they keep coming back, again and again." (my italics)

Conspicuously missing from the list of products mentioned in the brochure is tobacco. Tobacco products account for 26.5% of merchandise purchases at convenience stores, more than any other product category (beer is second at 14.2%).³ Much of that tobacco is purchased by children and adolescents. The 1989 Teenage Attitudes and Practices Survey, a national survey on tobacco administered to


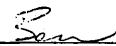
	
GARB-KO, INC. 3925 FORTUNE BLVD. • P. O. BOX 5947 • SAGINAW, MI 48603-0947 • PHONE (517) 799-6937 • FAX (517) 799-9405	
TO: All Stores	DATE: March 25, 1993
FROM: Ben Woznica	RE: Philip Morris Promotion
<p>Philip Morris and Garb-Ko are bringing an exciting cross merchandising promotion to your store for the month of May. If your store is participating in the Philip Morris Retail Masters Program you are eligible to receive our May 2-pack Marlboro special. Two packs of Marlboro will be banded together with a one dollar (\$1.00) off coupon, good toward the purchase of a gallon of milk in your store. This promotion allows you to sell 150 2-pack deals with one dollar off the price of a gallon of milk. You should encourage customers that purchase cigarettes in the morning or during the day to buy the 2-pack and stop back on their way home to pick up a gallon of milk with the dollar off coupon.</p> <p>Beginning on April 19, S. Abraham and Sons will ship to your store a display kit for this promotion. <u>You will need to place an order for fifteen (15) cartons of Marlboro Cigarettes</u> to be banded with this one dollar off coupon. Beginning April 26, a Sales Representative from Philip Morris will visit your stores to band together 2 packs of Marlboro cigarettes with this coupon. The Philip Morris Representative will not leave unbanded coupons in the store. Each store can receive 150 coupons. If your store does not have the necessary inventory on hand, you may lose out on a great deal.</p> <p>The display header card will tell your customers that the coupon is good for \$1.00 off the purchase of one gallon of milk. This coupon should be handled as a manufacturers coupon. The full retail of the milk should be rung up and the coupon value (\$1.00) should be placed on the manufacturers coupon line of your daily cash report.</p> <p>This is a unique opportunity which allows you to get your cigarette customer to come back to your store for a non-traditional purchase. Your store is going to sell more premium cigarettes at full margin and possibly get your cigarette customer to stop in for an additional visit and make an additional purchase of milk at full margin.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please contact your Garb-Ko Field Representative.</p> <p>GOOD SELLING!!!</p> <p> Ben Woznica Marketing Product Manager</p>	

Figure 1



Figure 2

9135 youths 12–18 years old in the US, asked young smokers several questions about where they obtained their cigarettes. Among 12- to 17-year-olds who usually bought their own cigarettes ($n = 565$), 84.5% said they purchased cigarettes “often” or “sometimes” from “a small store, such as a 7-Eleven or a gas station” (compared to 49.5% for large stores and 14.5% for vending machines).⁴

About 185 7-Eleven stores in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio are operated by Garb-Ko, Inc (an area licensee of the Southland Corporation) based in Saginaw, Michigan. In March 1993 Garb-Ko wrote to all its stores announcing that “Philip Morris and Garb-Ko are bringing an exciting cross merchandising promotion to your store for the month of May” (figure 1). Those who purchased two packs of Marlboro received a one-dollar-off coupon (figure 2) good toward the purchase of a gallon of milk. The promotion was quite noticeable in the stores I visited: a rack in a prominent location of the store displayed the 2-packs with their yellow coupons (figure 3), a sign on the rack announced the milk offer, and another sign appeared on the door of the refrigerator where the milk was kept (figure 4)

The Garb-Ko memorandum suggested that stores “should encourage customers that purchase cigarettes in the morning or during the day to buy the 2-pack and stop back on their way home to pick up a gallon of milk with the dollar-off coupon”. My, wouldn’t Mom and Dad be proud of their child for picking up a gallon of milk for the family on the way home from school!

I wrote to Nick Bellows, the Chief Executive Officer of the American Dairy Association of Michigan, asking about his awareness and opinion of this “cross-merchandising” promotion. In the letter, I noted my own disgust with “the linkage between cigarettes (a deadly, addicting product) and milk (a healthful and wholesome product)”. In his reply to my letter, Bellows gave me the following report (based on information he received from their national association in Chicago):

“Each year, for the past several decades, we engage in a selection process (several hundred products annually) designed to choose approximately 8–10 products which have indicated a financial interest in



Figure 3



Figure 4

doing business with the American Dairy Association. I have been advised that to date we have not participated in a campaign described above nor do we have plans for future involvement. I hasten to add plans in Michigan are in accord with our national association.”

This statement, as mild as it is, suggests that the dairy association recognises that cigarettes are antithetical to the image the association seeks for dairy products. Perhaps when a tobacco company launches a cross-merchandising promotion involving cigarettes and infant formula, the dairy association will speak out more strongly. – ED

1. Bassett T. Who are the turkeys? *Tobacco Control* 1993; 2: 161.
2. 7-Eleven Food Stores: *Franchise Information* (brochure). Saginaw, Michigan: Garb-Ko, Inc. undated.
3. *State of the Industry: convenience store industry totals, trends & averages*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Association of Convenience Stores, 1993.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessibility of cigarettes to youths 12–17 years – United States, 1989. *MMWR* 1992; 41: 485–8.

all. Also, the cigarette offers the fashion photographer a perfect extension of the arm and hand of the willowy models so favoured by Western fashion. And some brands are even called "Slim", surely no coincidence when slimness is at such a premium and when cigarettes can be used to suppress appetite and thus help prevent weight gain.

What is surprising, then, is the level of restraint exercised by fashion magazine editors and those who prepare their pictures and advertisements. Compared to the numbers in their industry who smoke, the appearance of the cigarette is actually quite rare, no doubt much more rare than the tobacco companies would wish. The Gianni Versace ad reproduced here is almost crying out for cigarettes to complete the mean, tough, macho image. This restraint, indicating that fashion does have a conscience, should encourage health campaigners to keep up the pressure on magazine editors and their colleagues in the fashion business to persuade them not to acquiesce to the linking of smoking and fashion. But even if some do not listen to health arguments now (suggested by the ads shown here for Guess jeans and Bijan perfume), sooner or later other effects of an ongoing public information campaign about tobacco may make them change their minds.

As smoking becomes increasingly outlawed in public places; as non-smokers gain the upper hand and find their voice in the press; as famous, once-fashionable smokers die and the press makes more of the association between their smoking and their deaths; and as more and more damning scientific evidence is published; those who decide whether or not to licence their prestigious names to cigarette-makers may decide that the fees are more than offset by loss of the goodwill that is the very basis of their wealth, enabling them to sell their goods at inflated prices. As a spokes-



From the October 1992 issue of Esquire magazine

person for Dunhill luxury goods told a British magazine over two years ago: "We would prefer not to be associated with the cigarettes." And although, in that instance, common ownership of the two lines of business left little immediate hope, there may soon come a time when the tarnished image of cigarettes is seen to be dragging down the sales of luxury clothes and leather goods. Writing this piece on my word-processor, the spell-checker tripped up on the word Dunhill: it could only recognize dunghill, downhaul, downhill, and downhole. One day, the same truth will dawn on fashion executives.

DAVID SIMPSON
Director,
International Agency on
Tobacco and Health,
London, United Kingdom



From the August 1992 issue of Esquire magazine